

Free thought

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God is a myth; immortality an illusion; religion a gigantic fraud.

Letters

FREE THOUGHT

Sir,—Your monthly Magazine FREE THOUGHT broadens the mental horizon of a person who reads it. This magazine is essential to our society to find out the truth.

—Nagendra Rao,
Bhadravatti,

Sir,—FREETHOUGHT is improving in quality and quantity. If you can retain it, it will have wide circulation in and outside India.

—Roy Philip,
Kerala

Sir,—More sales of FREETHOUGHT mean more persons saved from god, religion and caste besides superstitions and blind beliefs.

—M.V. Rao Naidu
Gujarat

Sir,—The November issue of FREE THOUGHT delighted me very much. The contents were uniformly good.

It is noticed that printing errors are popping in at places. Kindly take more care to avoid them.

—P. V. Jayaprakash
Bandra

Sir,—I am remitting a sum of Rs. 95/- by M.O.

I think the amount is sufficient for 21 subscribers of FREETHOUGHT for 6 months. So please send FREETHOUGHT to 21 District Libraries in Andhra Pradesh, where the number of readers is high. I feel it will help to enlighten atleast some readers.

After reading, I leave my copy of FREE THOUGHT in a local library, so that more persons are able to go through it. Perhaps, other members and subscribers could follow suit.

—Y. Venkateswara Rao,
Tuni

ANTI-SUPERSTITION ISSUE

Sir,—Thanks to Mr. Mukund for the article 'Teach Them no Superstition'. Very thought provoking, positive rational expression on the part of a real rationalist! It can touch not only the head of a rationalist but also the heart of a forward looking religionist.

—Mohansingh Pradhan,
Sikkim

Sir,—In appreciation of the November issue of FREETHOUGHT—a special issue on Anti-Superstition — and especially Dr. P. Krishnan's article on Rationalism and Health, I have to state, being a doctor myself, that I can understand the difficulties all the doctors, have to face to dispel the superstitious belief from their patients.

I have to deal with many cases of superstitious belief and imaginary fear regarding the causative factors for diseases.

All men of scientific medicine must be freethinkers, like myself, so as to put their patients and ths relatives in the right path of recovery. If all men of scientific medicine take an oath to eradicate superstition, I think, there will be a breakthrough, for, each superstitious belief is linked with body, health-medicine or the like.

I am glad to note that medical men are taking keen interest nowadays in the idea of freethinking as evidenced by the list of Life members of I. R. A. published in November, 1977 issue, which contains the names of four doctors with M.B.B.S. and post graduate qualification (my qualification M.B.B.S., F.C.G.P. being omitted.)

I wish the activities of I.R.A. would grow so that each and every citizen of India cultivates the habit of freethinking. The activities of I.R.A. can be expanded by establishing Rationalists' centres in each and every town with its activities spread over the sub-urban and village areas. The existence of I.R.A. and the rationalistic ideas must be given a wide propaganda in each and every town. There may be so many veteran rationalists, not aware of the outlets for their rationalist activities and they may be roused to activity.

—Dr. B. Mari Chetty,
Salem

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"All religions are equally sublime to the ignorant, useful to the politician, and ridiculous to the philosopher."

—TITUS LUCRETIVS
(Roman Poet, B. C. 96 - 55)

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C. A. Seshadri

Free thought

Nature Refutes God Theory

The South Indian peninsula could not have had it worse. Two cyclones within month battered the four States dealing mortal blows to several tens of thousands of people while rendering a few million people homeless. Damage to property is estimated at several billions of rupees.

We sympathise with the affected people. We, as rationalists, cannot rest content with a minute's silence. Nor are we sorry that heaven and hell will suddenly be overflowing with departed souls.

We cannot fail to note that places of worship, Hindu Muslim and Christian alike, fared no better than the dwelling of the most sinful. While the Ranganatha temple in Srirangam was flooded by the river waters of Cauvery, the famed Nagore mosque received a severe beating from the cyclone that hit Nagapattinam. Nor did it spare the Church at Velankanni to which has been attributed miraculous powers? All of them were weather beaten, isolated and helpless with their very existence at stake.

It was, as it were, nature in all its fury was proving its prowess against man-made omnipotents-laughing, teasing and howling at man's ignorance and stupidity. It was a satire against the all-knowing astrologers and the 'all-powerful' godmen. Is it not an irony that the main victims

included three of the widely publicised shrines? Is it suprising that faithfals were ravaged as the very existence of their gods was threatened?

Perhaps the worst parasite would have been the least affected. The poor but honest hut dewller would have lost his hut and his few belongings including cattle and poultry. But the ugly rich in their reinforced cement concrete constructions, rolling in tax-evaded money should be using the occasion to sell a litre of kerosene at Ra. 5/-and food articles at 300% of the normal prices! Law of supply and demand!!

Only the blindly superititious can retain faith in the face of such events. What more proof, if proof was needed at all, can better the most eloquent and devastating proof given by nature?

THE CORPSE WALKS—Y. A. Lokhandwala

(The President on BRA was inspired by his escape from the doorsteps of death-Ed)

It was, when, alive,
Hale and hearty,
Always active and agile,
Dauntless and smarty.
A bolt from the blue,
So sudden and surprising,
Severe, sinister heart attack,
Almost rendering it dead.
Relatives around frantically,
Started invoking help,
Of god the illusory,
To revive the Corpse.
None, but the power of its will,
Alone sustained the ordeal,
It uttered "I want to live",
And defied death's deal.
That corpse now is alive up and walkin,
Against myth and godmen crusading.

A WORTHY DISCIPLE

A young saint found one of his disciples almost looked like a twin brother of himself. One day he asked the disciple "was your mother also one among my father's sewikas?" The disciple smiled and answered- "No Swamiji! my father was one among his sewakas."



FANTASY VS. ILLUSION

BY

Margaret Bhatt

In One BALBHARATHI English Reader of Maharashtra State there is a lesson entitled "Long Long Ago." It tells of a time when flour and not sand covered the beaches. This the woman collected daily to make bread. A certain Sakhubai decides that she will fill enough into a large sack to last her a week in order to save herself the trouble of a daily trip. But the other women get angry. "Don't do this," they say. "God will be angry." When she refuses to heed them they do not talk to her any more. After seven days when she returns to the beach resolved to fill two sacks for two weeks, she finds all the flour has been changed into sand. "What shall?" she weeps, "I was greedy. I didn't listen to my friends. Now God is angry with me."

Greedy or efficient?

It is not difficult to imagine how a lesson would proceed on a basis of this text. Why was God angry? Because she was greedy. (Actually she was merely being efficient). Therefore God punished her. In like manner if we are also avaricious or greedy it will make God angry, because God is always angry when we sin. Therefore to be good one must be godly.

Fear-induced morality:

Such morality is not based on personal conviction but imposed from outside and plays on one's fear of reprisal from some Unknown Being called God.

However, as these young people grow older they will begin to discern that punishment does not always follow if they break the rules. Nevertheless, the fear persists, and to make sure that God is suitably placated, they perform all the necessary rituals of prayer and puja.

My neighbour, a Tamilian Brahmin tells me she does not really believe all that she practises but she does it because of custom. The truth is that her adult perceptions are still over-awed by her infantile fear which she does not have the courage to relinquish. So she practises a ritualised hypocrisy.

Fantasy vs illusion:

Now fantasy in literature is essential to the process of growing-up; but it is important to make a distinction between those stories which foster fantasy, and those which promote illusion as this particular story does.

All children indulge in flights of imagination and often startle us with the strange tales they invent concerning themselves and the feats they perform. These are not an early indication of crookedness; but shows their need to get on top of seemingly uncontrollable and more frightening aspects of their lives like fear of the dark, anxiety and boredom. Because their experience of the world is so limited they supplement their limited comprehension with fantasies.

Mythical Tales :

Good literature for children recognises this need. But a casual perusal of many of the books and literature being produced for young readers in this country reveals two dominant themes: a high moral tone emphasising that goodness lies in godliness and an endless re-telling of ancient religious myths—predominantly Hindu. Folk-tales also abound but are so trivial that they hardly merit attention.

India Book House puts out a steady stream of myths in comic books which are avidly read by old and young—as only comics are read. Unlike the fantastical world created by modern writers who are aware of the child's psychological needs, these ancient tales answer no questions and provide no solutions. They strengthen illusions.

Myths are comfortable things to have for they sustain the weak in heart and cowardly of spirit. This idea further extended into our films where cheap religious sentiment abounds. A hero or

heroine, confronted by insurmountable difficulties, cries to the gods and is answered by a divine vision or a voice from the clouds. Prayer and severe penance is rewarded by enormous wealth and beatitude. Children find these simplistic lessons easy to understand. They do not stop to think how such grovelling supplication degrades human dignity. Nor how farcical it appears that the gods who are omnipotent and supreme can be bribed into changing their minds by these grovelling humans.

Doubt and religiosity :

What is really demonstrated through such means is that humans are victims of their own ingrained fear. My uneducated servant-woman once explained to me with remarkable wisdom that the greater one's sense of doubt the stronger and more compelling must be one's idea of God in order to feel reasonably secure. The weaker a man the more religious he will appear. But in return for that sense of security religion urges us to be passive and resigned to the will of God. And therefore we never really learn to be self-sufficient.

Need for myths :

The mythology of a civilisation is essential to its identity, and to an understanding of the universe, life and death and its own particular history. In ancient myths are found the beginnings of history, and the ethos of a people. But with enlightenment and scientific awareness people move away from these ancient myths and shape newer ones for themselves. This is the basic difference between progressive

groups and those societies based on rigid, backward-looking mythologies. Such religions have always resisted change.

Yet what our young people need today are a whole set of modern myths which will help them face the challenges of these times. I once lived in a suburb in Bombay where from my window I daily saw four little boys waiting for their school bus to the local convent. One of the boys always stood some distance away from the others. But sometimes the other three went across to him, surrounded him, tweaked his ears, cuffed him and provoked him without any apparent reason. I wondered about this until one day the old sweeper who swept my compound of leaves told me the lad was his grandson. The father had educated himself and worked in a bottling company and he had enrolled his son in the local convent. The boy will probably be fighting for a foothold all his life because none of the ancient myths, legends or lessons in books offered those other three any guidance on how they should have regarded their class-mate.

Gandhi offered us some remarkable new myths on such problems. But Gandhi himself is becoming mythologised and,

like the scriptures, his teachings are now merely quoted. Ambedkar is suffering the same fate. It is not uncommon to find a plaster bust of him placed beside the Buddha in neo-Buddhist shrines in homes.

Goodness vis a vis godliness:

Because we insist that goodness is godliness we twist our history to fit that end. The RAMAYANA and MAHABHARATA are not important as accounts of former inter-tribal conflict but for the deeds of gods and super-beings fought on an almost cosmic level. This deification is common even today. Shivaji has become part of a semi-religious cult and time will complete the process as it has in the case of Sikh gurus. Greatness like goodness comes only from godliness.

What young people need are new myths based on the more universal values of humanism, along with fantasies which honestly articulate their fears and failings and then demonstrate that they can be used to strengthen their self-reliance without reference to a nebulous deity. In such literature reason would take precedence over emotion and shallow sentiment in shaping their destinies through knowledge of natural law. ●

BORED MEETING

After a long dry sermon, the minister announced that there would be a brief meeting of the board immediately after the benediction. Following services, a stranger was the first to meet the minister up front.

"You must have misunderstood the announcement," said the preacher, "I announced a meeting of the board."

"So I heard," replied the stranger, "and if there was anyone here more bored than I was, I'd like to meet him."

RATIONALISM IN SEX

Dr. T. Jayavelu

Superstition would mean an ignorant or irrational belief in supernatural agency, omens, divination, sorcery, and so on, and rites or practices proceeding from such belief. Medicine would mean 'to cure'. This is the same root word for curate which means a priest, a mediator between god and worshippers. Superstition and curate are built into each other, and inseparable.

The primary purpose of man biologically is to propagate his own specie. This process involves "sexual contact", "conception", "delivery", "growth" and "death". All other developments in the nature of material, cultural and spiritual care arise from this basic process. Irrational belief abounds in every aspect of this cycle.

(Mis) Conception:

The spermatozoa in the male and the ovum in the female are brought together by sexual congress. No other cell in the body can substitute their function. Want of knowledge of this fact has led to innumerable irrational beliefs. To tell you one: semen of man is obviously seen and therefore from time immemorial it is the belief that man planted

the seed and woman nurtured. Both parents contribute to the *conception of the child*. Its blood, say the people, comes from the mother because before a woman conceives she menstruates regularly, and this is nothing but blood while after she is pregnant her menses stop and the baby starts to be moulded. So it is obvious that she gives her blood to the child. The father, on the other hand, contributes the flesh, because of the heavy lumps (of semen) that he puts into the mother. As a result children are usually expected to resemble their father, unless the blood of the mother has been stronger than that of man, when it will look like its mother.

Sex determination:

Sex is determined by the male partner only. Nevertheless the female is blamed. Usually male child is preferred. Witch doctor claims to possess potent drugs to influence the sex of a child. Herbs and roots are given to the mother before she conceives again after the birth of a child. They are said to change her womb so that if all her children have hitherto been daughters, she will in future bear sons only, and vice versa.

Barrenness is attributed to some deficiency in the blood of either woman or her husband. Conception, it is held, can take place only if the man's blood (Semen) agrees with women's. If it does not, her womb will fail to hold the semen. Most cases of sterility are ascribed to the rejection of semen by the womb. This is most frequently due to the fact the woman, before marriage, led a very promiscuous life, and consequently absorbed so many different kinds of male blood (semen) that they spoiled one another and flowed out of the womb, which has become accustomed to rejecting the semen. It may also be due to her having at some time induced an abortion, and so spoiled her blood permanently. Intercourse during menses is likely to affect woman with sterility or with bad hip, because his blood (semen) instead of mixing with hers in the womb to make her conceive flows over her hips, where it remains to trouble her.

Cure for Sterility

I may describe a supposed treatment for barrenness in woman when a woman's sterility is due to the defective quality of her blood certain herbs are given in the morning and evening. This is said to go to the womb to dry it up, so that the blood (semen) should not run out. As long as she is taking the medicine her husband should not sleep with any one else, or the treatment will fail! Sometimes the witch doctor joins the bloods of the couple by cutting them both on the pubis, and transferring the blood from the husband's body to the wife and vice versa. (The slaughter of the virgins in the municipality of Manwat in the Parbhani

District of Maharashtra, by the municipal president and his kept-woman portrays this custom vividly)

External organs of sex:

Prevalence of wrong ideas on the size and shape of external genitalia are many. There is another common belief that in childhood if a boy urinates his penis should stiffen, but if it dangles loosely he will be impotent. God has formed him like that and no treatment will be of use. Mutilations like male and female circumcisions are widely practised even now in advanced societies, not to say the primitive groups. Religious rites for well being of the sex organs are practised in south Indian society ('Nonbu' as it is known in Tamil territory). Belief in the relation of menses to the cyclical changes of moon is deep rooted.

Meaningless Terms:

Virgin birth or immaculate conception so sedulously preached by various religions have led to disrepute of religious orders. The tragedy of Sister Maureen, a Roman-Catholic nun of 37 years of age, of New York State, US, is a pointer. Misconception of sex in our society has given rise to such words as immorality, passion, celibacy, asceticism, chastity and so on, vigorously advocated and supported by various religions. Ban on sorority by the church in the name of immorality and Passion has led to breaking up of family.

What I have so far outlined is only a fraction of the deep-rooted beliefs of people in our country with reference to "sexual union" which is a very healthy biological necessity. ●

AMERICAN ATHEIST'S IMPRESSIONS OF INDIA

—by RAY STANDIFORD, California - 92335

This summer I had the good fortune to be selected as a participant in an "Intercultural seminar on the changing role of woman in the U. N. Decade for Women 1975-85 in India" from June 14 till August 4.

Unbelievably I found two strong and active atheist organizations in Madras. One the "Self Respect Association" for the state of Tamilnadu where Madras is located and the other headquarters of the "Indian Rationalist Association".

Optimism

Both organizations furnished me with valuable information and publications for use in my study and were very hospitable. I enjoyed talking at length to Mr. A. Suryanarayana, General Secretary of I.R.A., and to the editor of FREETHOUGHT, Mr. Seshadri and his wife invited me to their home along with some other members of the association and we had a most pleasant evening talking about religion and enjoying a fine Indian meal. I'm sure atheism has a great future in India judging by the people I came into contact with while in Madras.

Religious circus

This was my second trip to India and one might say that I went back because I just couldn't believe what I had seen the first time. The whole country could be described as a great religious circus. It is exciting and colourful for the tourist and student, but underneath one feels very angry and frustrated because of what religion has done to a

beautiful country and a handsome and intelligent race of people.

Everywhere one finds holy water, bathing and cremation ghats, cows, temple bells, monkeys, gods, goddesses, incense, holy pollution, sadhus, celebrities, mystics, healers, mass festivals, and colourful ceremonies to accompany the person through life from birth to death.

Hinduism

About 80 per-cent of the people of India are Hindu. Hinduism has a great collection of duties and ceremonies. It provides an almost endless round of reincarnation and scares people into being righteous in order to better their position for after death. It provides for a minute structuring of society with thousands of castes and outcastes. The horrible part of all this is the seeming acceptance that people have of their position in life.

Women

Women of course are the symbol of religious faith in the home and act accordingly. It is the women who makes vows, observes fasts and does penance for the well being of the family. Marriage is idealized. (as it is in most countries.) The sole function of women is to breed and the home is the breeding pen. Women have been brainwashed into believing they are impure because of menstruation and childbirth and they seem to accept the derogatory statements that their religious

books say about them. The value of the wife is in the service she renders her husband and family. The importance attached to sons has strengthened the patriarchal structure.

Meeting With Desai

The Indian situation has probably developed to a point of no return, and the only hope lies in further, fast decay. Certainly the Indian politician and religionist of today has done nothing about turning the country around. I asked Mr. Morarji Desai the prime minister to comment on the emancipation of women in relation to population explosion. His answer was, "What do you mean by emancipation?" Such a thing as female servitude doesn't exist to him. He would probably also say that

there is separation of church and state and freedom of women because the new constitution provides for this. He also dwelt at length on the permissiveness of western society. Mr. Desai doesn't claim to be "born again." He is the same old Gandhian Desai of old leading his people in the holy land. After our group's meeting with him he probably retired to his quarters for ritual cleansing after pollution!

Hinduism is fair game to the visiting foreigner. An Indian visiting the U. S. would also find much to criticize about the obvious riches of our churches and the many weird practices of Christianity.

MEN SO CRUEL! IN HEAVEN?

Around 1511, an Indian chief named Hatuey was taken into custody in Cuba for developing a small-scale resistance movement against Spanish colonialists and was sentenced to be burned at the stake. As a compassionate gesture he was advised to embrace Christianity so he would, in the end, gain admission to heaven. He inquired if white men would already have arrived. On being assured of this probability, he said, "Then I will not be a Christian; for I would not go again to a place where I must find men so cruel".

Courtesy: "SUNDAY" 23-10-77

"A CRITIQUE OF WHAT BECOMES OF THE 'SOUL' AFTER DEATH"

By A. S. K.

(The author, Comrade A. S. K. is a rationalist of more than five decades' standing. His close association with the iconoclast and the most single-minded rationalist, Periyar E. V. R. led him to the Tamil book "EVR, the crescendo of rationalism". Here he is taking the cudgels against the forte of many intellectuals' Spiritualism viz. the obscure theory of souls, propounded by no less an 'authority' than Swami Sivananda. The articles will be serialised. Ed)

Swami Sivananda of the divine Life Society Shivanda Nagar, Tehri-Garwal, Himalaya, has written a book titled, "What becomes of the soul after Death", which has run into the Eighth Edition.

The Publisher's note says:

"We feel that the perusal of the present work will confirm man's belief that 'death is not the end of life', that his actions here unfailingly react upon him in the 'after state' too and will stimulate his *Vichara* or power of investigation".

The introduction, in all probability was contributed by Swami Sivananda, the Author himself, though it is not signed. Among other matters, the "Introduction" says:

"Paraloka-Vidya or the science about the departed souls and their planes of living is a subject of absorbing interest. It is a mysterious Science which contains many secrets or hidden wonders. It has intimate connection with Panchagni-Vidya or the science of transmigration propounded in the Cchando-gya Upanishad. The doctrine of reincarnation or metempsychosis, transmigration of the souls and spiritualism came under the Paraloka-vidya. Everybody is curious and anxious to know 'this science'".

Then it speaks of many who have come and gone. "You are all anxious to know what has become of them. Do they still exist? What is there at the other at the other side of death? Have they become nonexistent or have they dwindled into an airy nothing?",

Then again, "Death is a subject which is of the deepest interest to everyone".

Then the "Introduction" goes on to assert that "by actual communication with the spirit world through science, mediumship, etc., it has been proved that the 'individuality survives and persists after the dissolution of the physical body'".

Having kindled one's fancy, it makes the erudite claim:

"The other side of the death is accurately described in this book. It has been scientifically examined and carefully described. It contains the essence of the Upanishadic teachings..... You have suffered very much simply out of ignorance and superstition concerning this most important matter. If you go through this book carefully the veil of ignorance will be removed. You will be freed from the horrors of death".

Hence the book is a talisman to conquer death or it tears down the veil of ignorance and takes you to the Millennium!

The importance of this book thus asserted, deserves the reverential reading by everyone and at any rate, as I write, till today over 80,000 copies of this book must have been sold out. My copy is the Eighth Edition and I am sure, it will run into several Editions more.

And now to the contents of the book itself.

Mind

The ISAVAYA UPANISHAD is quoted for the prayer of a Dying Man,

"(May my) Prana melt into the all-pervading Air, the eternal Sutratman, and may this body be burnt by fire to ashes. OM! O Mind! remember my deeds! O Mind! remember my deeds!"

And so the mind (whatever that might mean) is the repository of all Memory!

Real life

Then there is an "ODE TO DEATH" followed by "What is Life?"

Among other things we are told,

"To ignore the names and forms,
To take the essence hidden in them,
To drink the nectar of Immortality,
Is real life".

Obviously, the first two lines are intended for Man on this earth, while the drinking part of the third line is the duty cast on the "mind". A combination of the two constitutes "Real Life".

Real Death

Then we are regaled with an aphorism on Real Death.

"Not to study the Gita, Upanishads' Daily,

Not to remember God at all times,
Not to serve Sadhus and Gurus.
Is real death".

This is followed by eight other stanzas which say among others,

"Not to have Atma-Drishti,
is real Death,
"Not to have Brahma-Jnana,
Is real death.
"To eat, drink and be merry,
To waste the time uselessly,
To lose one's honour and name,
Is real Death.
"To gamble, and play cards, smoke
To read novels, drink and scandalise,
To gossip, cavil and scandalise,
Is real Death.
"To lead a sensual life,
To waste vital energy,
To have a lustful look,
Is real death".

We shall revert back to these aphorisms a little later.

"Birth and Death" and "Rebirth", that form the prologue to the book are also to be found. We shall also try to understand them later, for they seem to be the quintessence of the book itself.

(To be continued)

CELIBACY ?

Two old priests got married, and had their first-night When they met in the next morning, one remarked to the other "I must consult a doctor as I could not do anything last night." The other old man also was disappointed that night. He said "You are better than myself. I must consult a psychiatrist, for I did not even think of doing anything last night."

WHAT NEXT?

S. Lakshmirathan Bharati

Inward Secularism:

Nearly half a century has gone by since Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya was stupefied hearing people shouting 'Ravana Ki Jai' at a conference held in the South. After the impact of the West, social reformers carried the day often giving a shock to vedic 'Sanatana' and Dharmic 'Varanasrama'. Gandhi convinced that there can be no political freedom without removing social injustice. The radical humanism of Roy, the two nation-theory of Jinnah, the anti-untouchability revolt of Ambedkar, and the self-respect campaign of Periyar Ramaswami revealed reforms were inadequate and prognosticated the doom of religion and the necessity for complete secularism.

A Set Back

The gleam of hope for a non-Violent total revolution received a set back by the assassination of Gandhi, by Brahman, by the shelving of Satyagraha (the weapon to fight injustice) by yet another Brahman posing as his spiritual successor and by the abrogation of rule of law and judicial process by a third Brahman all blazing out from Maharashtra. Is it merely an accidental coincidence or a selective choice that Marathi Brahmins are found to be 'saviours' since the day of Parasurama. Neither the blatant autocracy of Nehru dynasty nor the avowed democracy of Janata combine raise hopes of secularism and rationalism.

Religion And Politics:

Can we look for hope elsewhere? History reveals that Religion and Politics cause havoc to mankind, while professing to offer salvation and solatium on heaven and earth

with hosanna. Government is a necessary evil and a welfare State is still a rudderless ship on an unchartered stormy ocean. Ignorance, fear and hate still haunt man. He brings persecution, disasters and destructive wars on himself. "The profoundest of all infidelities is the fear that the truth will be bad" (H. Spencer). "The fundamental fear of man is the fear of confronting the void within" (K. B. Clark). As a cushion against the intolerable realities of his flimsiness, man invented as a compensatory protective agency God, demigods, godmen, priests, Kings, movie stars and a host of chaismatic beings. He willingly surrenders his will to a tribe or race a cult or ideology retreating as it were into a womb to relieve himself of his birth trauma.

Social Systems:

The primitive tribes finding sustenance in food gathering, hunting and with a predominant collective consciousness, progressed slowly into segmented and hierarchical castes and groups. With competition and division of labour, market societies evolved and individual skills and entrepreneurship brought into vogue contractual relationships.

Threat Of Technocracy

These continuing proliferations sharpened intellect to enable astounding conquests through science and technology and gave him the scenario of the vast field of atomic physics and molecular biology. Dominating the earth, he seeks to scan and scoop the space.

Yet the technology of the new 'organizational man' capable of atomic fission and fusion, of transplants and mind controls has put him on the brink of a precipice to face a predicament. One false step will hurl him headlong into a whirl pool of extinction. Consuming his natural resources so fast,

polluting his environment in a manner so insensible, he has to look back for means of survival. Tied to machines directed by computers, overwhelmed by a sense of alienation and anomie, he points his accusing finger verily at reason itself. Browning's "God is in his heaven, All's right in the world" has gone away. To an atheist "God is dead" and to an anarchist "The State is to wither". Neither the Nation States nor the United Nations offer any prospect of prosperity.

PATHOS OF POWER : "The education of the white man from the time of Greek City States has aimed at justifying crimes committed against humanity in the name of national honour" (J.F. Revel). "Power exhibits the symptoms of non-adaptive pathos and futility. The continuation, intensification and cumulative effect of any combination of power is a major threat to the organisation of social system" (B.B. Clark). "In the welter of confusion and chaos prevailing in the minds of man, society or States, it is hard to arrive by an analysis of such factors as rights or desires or needs, a correct valuation of social justice or a consistent theory of polity that will sustain a

dynamic equilibrium for the welfare and progress of humans.

RIGHT CHOICE : But is it beyond man? Man has annihilated distances, accelerated speed, erased the barriers and the world has shrunk. He is individualistic but yet global. "Man belongs wherever he wants to go and he will do plenty well when he goes there" (Dr. Warner Von Braun).

Evolution becoming selfconscious is man. To be objective is not to convert reality into a duality. It only means the intellect is to be pervasive over the reflexes, instincts and emotions, but unfortunately he found himself in a sorry spectacle of widening cultural gaps. "The homo-intellectualis must be led to victory over the homo-sentimentalis" (Theodor Geigg). "The history (of rationalism) is the story of the progressive education of the human race to meet the tests facing us today". (G.R. Morrow) "The whole of human culture is rooted in our valuations and value ascriptions. Value patterns are always subject to revision and re-valuation. There is an epigenetic process giving room for choices" (W.H. Workmeister) Why not we trust man to save himself by making the right choice?

FORTH COMING ISSUES OF "FREE THOUGHT"

- January, 1978 — Islam with emphasis on Dawoodi Bohras.
- February, 1978 — Spirits, Ghosts and witchcraft.
- March, 1978 — Ramayana

Contributors are requested to ensure that articles, jokes, cartoons, anecdotes, etc. are sent to us well in advance. The material for publication should be neatly typed in double space on one side of the paper and sent to us in duplicate. Agents are required at places not represented at present.

Editor (continued).

TEST FOR REASON

Sir,

The problem in 'Test for your reason' this time too, is fine, as are the Jokes.

It will be better to give prize (for 'Test for your reason') to members or subscribers who stand first in a series of 3 or 4 problems. The number will be less and you can distribute books worth Rs. 30/- or Rs. 40/- without lots.

I was delighted by Dr. A. T. Kovoov's article. It is a Paradox that doctors who know the life history of diseases do foolishly pray to god for good health.

... Vasi Reddy Madhu,
Kurnool.

Sir,

There is a moral in this story for rationalists. It is not enough to be a rationalist oneself. One must also propagate rationalism. Society benefits from the reasoning faculty of all its members.

... R Lakshminarayanan,
Bangalore.

BALAJI ISSUE

Sir,

I am very happy to see the Balaji Special issue (October, 1977) 'President meets Balaji' is very interesting. I congratulate the writer, Ms. Vasundhara, who has proved to be a great writer. 'Balaji - Male or Female' is also an interesting item. All the cartoons are excellent. 'A Sikh turned Rationalist' - has not changed his appearance? Why doesn't he remove his beard.?

... S. Hazarat Ali,
Rajahmundry.

RATIONALIST NOVELS

Sir,

A good novel is far better than 10 weighty articles. Nowadays young men like rationalist novels. Serious stuff does not arouse interest in them. Firmly believing in this I have published a novel in Malayalam. The hero of the novel is a professor who is about propounding rationalist philosophy exposing godmen and explaining away irrational phenomena that we find around us. The novel won instant critical acclaim from all newspapers and magazines including 'Mathrubhoomi' (Mathrubhoomi is known to be liberal in its reviews). The novel became very popular among college students. I should add that no publisher was willing to accept the manuscript. So I decided to publish it at my own expense. I have spent Rs. 2,500 to print the book though I could ill afford such a huge amount. Finally I have entrusted 'Current Books' Trichur, with the distribution of the work. Current Books is a concern owned by a man with Marxist pretensions. I have paid him only Rs. 1,000/- to this date. The book is priced at Rs. 7/- per copy. But then that is another side of the story.

The book was banned in the month of December 1972. The ban was lifted in 1974 after a prolonged legal battle which almost emptied my purse.

Now, after five long years, when I review the whole thing in retrospect, what surprises me most is that no rationalist came out in the open in support of my work. I have done my work not to get any praise from anybody. But after all, as Harold Lasker puts it, man is a vain creature. A little praise from the rationalists in those difficult days would have given a big boost to my morale. Recently I have received a letter from the American Embassy telling me that a copy of my book has been added to the Library of Congress, U. S. A. Well, that

is a little recognition from an unexpected quarter.

Sir, I would like to translate my work into other languages like English, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi etc, in order to reach a wider audience. But the project is beyond my financial resources. I do not want any financial benefit from the scheme. If the rationalist society can undertake the task I am ready to give the copyright free of cost and unconditionally to the society.

David Josephy,
Orissa..

FANTASTIC NONSENSE

Sir,

The other day, I was startled by an announcement made at the interlude in A. I. R. regarding flood and cyclone havoc. It said that the savegery of nature and destruction that followed was perhaps either to confirm the existence of god or to deplete the population boom. The existence of god is sought

to be proved by savagery and cannibalism

A. Sivalingam.
Tiruchi.

IS MR. KHUSHWANT SINGH A RATIONALIST ?

Sir.

An Agnoistic or Atheist does not give importance either to the sacred mark or to the sacred thread. The editor of the 'Illustrated Weekly' says that he does not attach importance to the appellation 'Singh' nor to his beard.

If he is a real Rationalist he should have long ago stopped the publication of 'Stars foretell' in his revered magazine. The Rationalists cannot accept astrology's claim to being a science.

We readers request you to be more careful when writing articles on people who claim themselves to be Rationalists.

Three cheers to Ms. Vasundhra for her article "President Meets Balaji".

A. Srinivasa Rao, Bsc, B. Ed.,
Madras.

GENESIS OF RELIGION

In class society nature is brought increasingly within man's understanding and control but the community is now divided against itself. The technique of magic is developed by the ruling class as a means of consolidating their privileges by investing them with supernatural sanctions. In this way the working class, being ignorant of the true causes of its subjection is reconciled to its lot. This is the genesis of religion. Religion is an out growth of magic which emerges with the class struggle. It is an inverted image of social reality. Just as magic expresses primitive man's weakness in the face of nature, so religion expresses civilized man's weakness in the face of society.

George Thomson

Religion—London 1950.

ATHEISM TEACHES THAT:

There is no Heavenly Father

Man must protect the orphans and foundlings or they will not be protected.

There is no God to answer Prayer

Man must hear and help man.

There is no Hell

We have no vindictive God or Devil to fear or imitate.

There is no Atonement or Salvation by faith

We must face the consequence of our acts.

There is no Beneficent or Malevolent Intent in Nature

Life is a struggle against preventable and unpreventable evils. The co-operation of man is the only hope of the world

There is no change after death to "Do our Bit"

We must do it now or never.

There is no Divine Guardian or Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Liberty

These are attributes of man. Man must defend them or they will perish from the earth.

DIGGING DARWIN'S GRAVE

A. P. J. MENON

A post graduate in science laments the absence of objective evaluation of the Theory of Evolution. The author is a scientist attempting to popularise science through writings in English and Malayalam
— Ed.

To a rational mind trained on the elevations of modern science, the attack on the concept of organic evolution constitutes an unscientific activity. All through the history of science, there have been fierce controversies with received theology and reluctant concessions were made to science. Yet even in the age of reason and scientific triumph,

the tyranny of religious prejudices lingers. A recent event is the anti-evolution stand of the fundamentalists and their attack on modern biology text books.

Evolution

Evolution is a central explanatory postulate of biology. Stripped of inessentials, it describes the gradual growth of plants and animals by descent and variations. It is a scientific fact that simpler forms of life are older and more complex forms emerge later in the record. Highly organized forms of life evolved from less organized ones slowly and gradually and not spontaneously. There is also a mechanism seeking to explain variation and survival. Dethroning the concept of immutability of species, Charles Darwin published his findings in the 'Origin of Species' in 1859.

Genesis made exact

Darwinism dealt a mortal blow to theology. The theory of creation was given in the Book of Genesis. Archbishop Usher had dramatically declared that the world came into being 4004 years before Christ. Dr. Lightfoot who was a Vice Chancellor of the university of Cambridge added precision to this by stating that Man was created at 9 a.m. on October 23, 4004 B.C. The act of creation was packed into a crowded six days. The pre-Darwinian biologists had a naive and simple notion. They believed that there were in heaven ideal animals and plants whose imperfect impressions were the earthly ones.

Apostle of dirt worship

Darwinism convulsed society. The descent of man from monkeys was bete noire to human vanity and esteem. Some ridiculed Darwin for his man-monkey relevation and suggested, quite falsely, that he looked like a monkey. In 1860 Bishop Wilberforce virulently attacked Darwinism and declared "The principle of natural selection is absolutely incompatible with the word of god". Bertrand Russell was told by his tutor in unmistakable terms "If you are a Darwinist, I pity you, for it is impossible to be a Darwinist and a Christian at the same time". That is probably the reason why

he was not a Christian! Carlyle described Darwin as the 'apostle of dirt worship'.

Yet Darwin dominated the world of thought and ideas. The massive data base he generated is a monumental triumph to biology. Like Einstein, Darwin did not show any trace of the noon-day brightness of his genius in childhood that was destined to illuminate the world. Yet even today, religion and theology have not reconciled with the doctrine of evolution.

Scopes trial

In 1925, Thomas Scopes, a biology teacher in Dayton High School of Tennessee was charged with teaching evolution. The prosecution side was conducted by the brilliant orator, jurist and one-time Secretary of State, Byran. The defence counsel was the eminent jurist Darrow who rallied brilliant professors from well known universities in support of his contention. There was a jury and most members were innocent of science. One of them had heard only of a Darwin who was a shopkeeper near his home. The trial which began with an invocation by a priest ended in a fine of \$100 dollars to Scopes. However, this was quashed by a superior court on technical grounds.

Throughout 1930s biology books in America were shy of evolution and avoided the mention of Darwin. A survey conducted among high school teachers in 1242 revealed that half of them did not describe evolution to

their students. In 1969, on the centenary of the publication of the *Origin of Species* H. J. Miller, Nobel laureate geneticist lamented that school biology in America was dominated by antiquated religious traditions. In order to remedy this defect, the National Science Foundation launched a 7-million dollar programme that yielded true good biology books.

Evolution encourages streaking?

This stirred up the hornet's nest. Critics from Texas attributed that the book has atheistic material which generated godless behaviour finding expression in the assassination of Kennedy. A vituperative campaign exploded. The law of the jungle will prevail. Pre-marital chastity and conjugal fidelity will vanish. Promiscuity and polygamy will prevail. Epicureanism will flourish. One woman went to the extent of saying that the streaking of 1974 was also a direct consequence of the teaching of evolution.

The concept of evolution described as a naturalistic religion by Huxley and a secure basis for ethics by Waddington is to be tested by public applause by Henry M. Morris, Director for the institute of Creative Research and he formulated the following text for an acid test of applause. Resolved that the special creation model of the history of the earth and its inhabitants is more effective in the correlation and prediction of scientific data than is the evolution model". Evolution, relativity, dilation are not to be tested by the lay public with whipped up emotions.

COULD YOU GUESS?

1. Total of eight letters would mean "endowed with reason".
2. The first three letters and the last three letters stand for "an animal" and "doctrine or theory", respectively.
3. The first five letters mean 'proportion'.
4. The first six letters stand for a system largely prevailing in an under developed country like India.
5. The answer is a threat to superstition.

S: V. S. Nair

THE ETHICS OF EUTHANASIA



DR. A. T. KOVOOR

Here is an exemplary way of facing the bitter part of life. May he Continue to inspire us-Ed.

Euthanasia is the merciful act of painlessly terminating the life of an organism suffering from an incurable disease or wound. Though there is no objection in practising euthanasia on animals, it is prohibited in the case of men. This is due to the fallacious Judaic, Christian

and Islamic beliefs that, unlike animals man alone was created by hand from clay and life was blown into it through the nostrils by God. Thus, according to them, God alone has the right to take life from a man. In countries dominated by the influences of these religions, doctors are not allowed to practise euthanasia even with the written permission of the suffering patient.

Rebirth and Mercy Killing

In Sri Lanka and India, where the majority of people believe in rebirth, euthanasia should be considered as a meritorious act that should be encouraged. It is more sensible for those who believe in rebirth to prohibit the present practice of doctors prolonging the life by medication of a person suffering from an incurable disease than prohibiting euthanasia, because by medication the doctors are only delaying the sick men's chance of discarding their diseased bodies to be reborn in younger and healthier bodies.

Instances

Once I witnessed the cruel act of a doctor administering oxygen to a cancer patient struggling between life and death. Probably his religious upbringing did not make him realise the cruelty of his act of making the dying person suffer a few more hours. How sensible it would have been if, instead of administering oxygen, he had given the patient an overdose of a sleeping drug.

On another occasion a doctor of very low intelligence was triumphantly boasting about the success he and his alcoholic doctor son achieved in reviving a lady who was in a deep coma as the result of cancer in her lungs, by giving her glucose drip. Although I told him that I would not like such a cruel act to be done even to my pet dog, the foolish doctor, who was obsessed with his religious delusions, continued to boast about how he and his drunkard son succeeded in keeping the sick lady conscious till her death.

The cancer specialist, who was told that his patient was in a coma, was happy to know that she was not able to feel any pain during the last hours of her life. He said that nature was doing what he himself would have liked to do if the law permitted. He was

thoroughly annoyed at the uncalled for interference of the two misguided quacks in making his patient suffer for a few more days.

My Health

My 80-year old body has cancer, in its bladder and as a result of it I am suffering from frequent haematuria. In view of my old age my doctors have ruled out surgery and radiotherapy. They are treating me by chemotherapy and blood transfusion in an attempt to keep me alive for a few more weeks or months, and not years. They have succeeded a good deal in this respect and I am thankful to them. I am able to attend to my normal work, although at a lesser scale.

Before long when I am bedridden and become useless to my fellow beings and myself, I will not allow my good doctors to prolong my life and suffering any more. Unfortunately, my doctors are prevented by an antediluvian law from terminating my suffering by putting me to sleep permanently even if I request them to do so.

My rational mind will not allow me to eat the so-called holy ash given by the juggled Sai Baba or drink my urine every morning as curative medicine for cancer at the advice of gullible Sai Baba devotees and Sri Morarji Desai!

The Only Hope

My only hope of escaping the forthcoming agony is in some of my friends who foolishly believe in rebirth even though there is no evidence for it. I appeal to them to compassionately help me to put an end to my suffering by getting me a liberal supply of sleeping tablets when I am completely bedridden.

It being a meritorious karma they need not hesitate to violate an outmoded law. In addition to helping me to get rid of my cancerous body to be reborn into a healthy young body, they themselves will be adding one more merit to their credit. Even saintly Mahatma Gandhi did not hesitate to break laws for doing good for his fellow men.

PACKAGING AND FORWARDING

Mr. Justice Desai speaking on "socio-economic justice and the legal system" at a function organised by the Ahmedabad Citizens Council, said that Rs. 29,000/- was spent on the funeral of the father of the managing director of a firm. The ceremonies included a "gala procession" and the sprinkling of his ashes over various rivers in the country.

It was decided that the company should foot the bill, but the question was how it should be shown in the account books. Ultimately, it was included in the category of "packing and forwarding".

S. GHOSH

by T. S. Selvaraj

The author, Mr. Selvaraj was also a founder Secretary of I.R.A. along with Mr. S. Ghosh. Here is how he echoes our feelings on the loss of our dear colleague.—Ed.

The Indian Rationalist Association has suffered a great loss in the death of Mr. S. Ghosh. As founder-Secretary of the Association he took a leading part in its formation.

I recall how some thirty years back, equipped with a list of addresses provided by the R.P.A. of London, he was calling on various rationalists in Madras with a view to forming a wing of the R. P. A. in Madras. As a representative of the R. P. A. he called on me one day in 1948 and invited me to his residence. There I met the late Mr. S. Ramanathan, the late Mr. M. Ziauddin, Mr. Laurent and two others and we decided to form a rationalist group in Madras, confining our activity initially to the holding of fortnightly meetings and discussions. The head-quarters was later shifted to No. 9, Broadway and it was here the decision to convene the 1st Convention of Indian Rationalists was taken and Mr. Ghosh contributed not a little to the successful organisation of the convention.

After a couple of years with us, he shifted to Delhi. He organised Rationalist groups in Delhi and Calcutta. He participated in student agitations in Bengal against the British while a student and in the Communist movement after he came out of college. Always unruffled and unostentatious, he worked with a passion for the rationalist movement. It was in the fitness of things he was elected President of the Association for the year 1975-76. For me he was always a valued colleague and a dear friend. The news of his death on 24th November, 1977 will be a shock to all who had known him.

MAN PROPOSES, GOD DISPOSES!

A high wall masonry CHURCH in Bapatla Taluk collapsed during the cyclone in Andhra on 19th November, 1977. Hundreds of people who took shelter in the church were promptly done to death. Praise be to Lord!

NEWS AND NOTES

Mr. Ghosh is no more

It is with deep regret we announce the sad and sudden demise of I. R. A.'s founder Secretary and former president, Mr. Satish Gosh at Delhi on 26-11-1977.

Mr. Ghosh born at Calcutta in 1911, joined the Indian Revolutionary Movement at the age of 12. When he was hardly 17 years old, he organized the Students' Movement against Caste discrimination in schools and colleges and he was promptly dismissed from the college. In 1928 with the help of his friends, he organised the All Bengal Students Association. From 1928 to 1930 he served as the Secretary of the District Students Association, Assistant Secretary of the Youth Association and also as the Assistant Secretary of the Khula District Congress Committee. In 1930 he was arrested by the then British Indian Government under BCLA Act and was in prison as political detainee till 1931. He then joined I. A. F. and was posted in war front at Imphal. But again for political reasons he was removed from the Air Force in 1940.

Even during the 1930's and early 1940's he was a Member of the Rationalist Association of India which was actively functioning from Bombay. When this Association became defunct during the war time, Mr. Ghosh and his other friends formed an Indian group of the Rationalist Press Association, London. Subsequently along with others he founded the Indian Rationalist Association in 1949 shouldering the onerous responsibility as its Secretary till 1957. In 1974 he was elected Vice President of I. R. A. and in the following year its President. After our VII Convention in December, 1974 he mobilised the Rationalists in Delhi and in March 1975 he founded the Delhi Rationalist Association of which he was the president.

'Rationalist' Magazine in Gujarathi

Baroda, November 4. The caste system and irrational faith in superstitions and fallacies were deprecated at a meeting of the Gujarat Rationalist Association presided over by Mr. M. B. Yadav.

Mr. Kamalashankar Pandia, President of the Indian Rationalist Association, said orthodoxy and irrationalism were strong in Gujarat. At the meeting, Messrs

K. K. Makwana, Jagannath Pillai, V. S. Rao Naidu and M. B. Yadav were elected conveners of the Jawaharnagar Rationalist Association. It was decided to publish "The Rationalist" in Gujarathi.

Lunacy of a Tirupathi Minister

Mr. L. Lakshmana Das, Minister for Endowments, Andhra said he felt that TTD funds should not be spent on educational institutions. But the funds could be used on the construction of temples, propagation of Sanskrit, Hindu religious dharma and culture, on medical aid schemes and starting destitute homes. He felt a Sanskrit University could be established with TTD (Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams) funds.

The State Government have decided to construct 6,500 temples under a phased programme in villages where there were no temples!

There was about 3,80,000 acres of temple lands in the State including 65,000 double crop lands. Most of them were in the hands of the rich. The Government was collecting information like the area of land under each temple, owner of the land and the present cultivator.

'The Hindu' - 7th Oct., '77

Profits of a Prophet

Self-styled Californian "messiah", Jim Jones proclaimed that he was resurrected from the dead, and could do the same for others, and also cure every disease. Recruiting a large following, he "purified" them by pitilessly trouncing them with tongue and stick. Claiming a "revelation", the "prophet" has now vanished into a Latin American jungle, with some thousand "disciples" and the millions he had snatched away.

Casteism in Action

Three Harijans were fined Rs. 100/- each by the eldermen of village Muthanal in North Arcot district for the 'offence' of riding on their bicycles. The victims were the employees of Neyveli Lignite Corporation. A Harijan postgraduate student was beaten up and ill-treated in Thanjavur district recently for 'occupying' a seat next to another student belonging

to a forward community in a roadside restaurant.

Missionary Monsters

Chaibasa (Bihar)—A student in a convent hostel of St. Xavier's Girls' High School lost Rs. 70/-. To trace the culprit, the warden, Sister Eguina, is said to have compelled three of the girls, Dulari Hembron, Mina Das and Matilda Aind to undergo an ordeal by fire. They were reportedly made to hold their hands over burning candles, with the warning that whoever stole the money would get burnt.

When all three suffered severe burns, the sisters kept it secret and tried their own medication. The girls were cut off from outside contacts and their parents were not informed.

As the wounds got worse, a local physician, Dr. Sen Gupta, was summoned to treat them.

A few students of the city subsequently forced their way to the convent and allegedly heard the weeping girls, hands still bandaged, pouring out the story of their ordeal.

'Blitz' - 17-9-77

South African Headache

Johannesburg cab driver Susanna Meyer, who takes "whites only", was placed in a very embarrassing position recently, when, taking a tanned French lady tourist for a "coloured girl", she asked her for her passport. The indignant lady hired another taxi. "I have not got light-meters in my eyes", Susanna Meyer complained. Though she believes in apartheid and does not question the race laws, she demanded she be allowed to carry people of all races in her taxi. Her "whites only" shingle was a business-losing proposition.

TM Courses barred in New Jersey Schools

A U.S. federal judge has barred teaching transcendental meditation (TM) courses in New Jersey public high schools.

U.S. District Judge H. Curtis Meanor said in a written opinion the public school teaching of TM, also known as the science of creative intelligence violated the separation of Church and State guaranteed in the First Amendment.

The Judge said Guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and other defendants had failed to prove TM was not a *disguised form of Hinduism*.

(Will our leaders stop to think before introducing T.M. and Yoga in schools?—Ed)

B V. Raman's Waterloo

Prof B. V. Raman who has successfully been avoiding Dr. Kovoov and the Indian Rationalist Association all these years has at long last met his waterloo at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore on 12th September, 1977.

Undermining the calibre of our Scientists, Prof. Raman accepted an invitation from the Staff Club of I.I.S. and chose to speak on "Astrology, a Science". He was caught unawares by two eminent scientists of the Institute, Dr. K. V. N. Sarma and Dr. U. R. Prasad both members of I.R.A. Both these Doctorates along with their colleagues Mr. Jayaram and Mr. Lakshminarayana showered on him a spate of inconvenient and embarrassing questions.

In his usual way he tried to confuse the audience by mixing up the words Astronomy and Astrology. But this time since his audience were all eminent scientists, his attempts were in vain. In his attempts to evade the questions posed to him, he made himself a laughing stock.

Even before the meeting commenced, Dr. Sarma and Dr. Prasad made good spade work and brought out a pamphlet covering some of the usual arguments advanced by believers of Astrology. They also reproduced the various wrong predictions of Prof. B.V. Raman published in FREETHOUGHT of June 1977 issue. When he was asked to reply to the points raised in it, Prof. Raman asked back "What about the predictions which have come true." We rationalists are aware that even if a rickshawala or a taxi driver makes predictions without any basic knowledge of astrology, some of them will come true!

Another explanation offered by Prof. Raman for his wrong predictions was that they were based on wrong data. If there are no means to verify the correctness of the data adopted for the calculations, we do not know how Prof. Raman can call Astrology a Science.

Though Prof. Raman declared that he had collected a lot of data to prove Astrology a Science he was forced to admit that he had not cared to analyse the data collected by him.

In his earlier talk which lasted nearly 70 minutes, Prof. Raman attacked the former vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, the entire Medical Profession and also the Meteorologists. His remarks were in bad taste, to say the least.

It is now for the scientists and all the Rationalists in India to cry a halt to this 'Profession' of Astrology which tries to capitalise on the gullibility of the people.



Inter Caste Wedding

Mr. B. Padmanabhan married Miss. K. Subbulakshmi under the auspices of I.R.A. on 31-10-1977 at Madras. The bride and bridegroom belong to two different castes and two different languages.

Kannatipparamba, Cannanore

A symposium was conducted under the auspices of Kannatipparamba Rationalist Association. Mr. M. B. K., Vice President of K. R. A., presided over the function. Mr. U. Kalanathan presented the subject "Soul-fact or fiction?". Pannayangad Kunhiraman talked on the Hindu View of soul. Mr. Narayanan

Periya, K. R. A. refuted the arguments of Kunhiraman.

Mundoor, Palghat

A symposium was conducted under the auspices of Mundoor Unit Rationalist Association (Palghat District). U. Kalanathan, General Secretary of K. R. A. presented the subject "Rationalism and Practical life". He asked the Government to confiscate all the 'idle gold' and cash money at temples, churches and mosques and thereby help the poor and downtrodden. Mr. V. P. Purushothaman, Vice-president of K. R. A. talked on 'the historical development of Rationalism'.

Sathyagraha at Guruvayoor

Kozhikode District Committee of K.R.A. has decided to send 10 delegates for Guruvayoor Sathyagraha of K.R.A. to protest against gold plating of the sanctum sanctorum of Guruvayoor temple with 120 kg. of purified gold, especially at a time when thousands of people of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Kerala and Kalpeni island were wiped out by storm and flood.

The Committee decided to donate Rs 100 to the flood relief fund of the Andhra Pradesh Government.

'Divine Miracle' Exposed

Workers of Kozhikode District Rationalist Association had exposed a so-called divine miracle report of a 'dumb boy' who called 'Ayyappaswamy' by the grace of 'Lord' Ayyappa. This miracle report appeared in Mathrubhoomi, a leading Malayalam daily. The case was investigated by U. Kalanathan, Secretary. The dumb boy called 'Krishnan, of Vallikannu Village was examined by Dr. Usman Koya, a member of the Rationalist Association. The doctor confirmed that the vocal organs of the boy had no defects at all but he could not speak due to lack of audibility. It was also found that the boy could not speak or make any clear sound. He could pronounce

'Aypa san' and this was made even before the so-called divine miracle took place.

This matter was exposed by the District Committee of K.R.A. in a press conference on 23-11-77 at Kidson Tourist Home, Calicut. The dumb boy and his two neighbours were presented in the conference and the reporters were allowed to test his sound-making ability.

Kozhikode District Committee demanded in a press release that statutory provision should be immediately made to punish devotees who propagate superstitions deliberately to collect money.

Rationalists' aid to Cyclone Victims

The Rourkela Rationalist Association expressed sympathy and concern for the thousands of victims of the recent devastating floods and cyclone in Andhra, Tamilnadu and

Kerala. They contributed Rs. 100 to Times of India Cyclone Relief Fund.

P. N. P. Appan
Secretary

Kanneganti Jaggaiah is Dead

We are sorry to record the sad demise of Mr. Kanneganti Jaggaiah of Ithanagar, Tenali, on 23-11-1977 at the age of 77. He was a well-known Freedom Fighter who courted imprisonment a number of times. He was a Humanist and Rationalist. He declined to accept the Political Sufferers' Pension, the land grant or the Tamra Patra. He was a staunch follower of late Mr. Tripuraneni Ramaswami Choudary and fearlessly campaigned against all social evils. He was a very close associate of the Dravida Kazagam Founder, Mr. E. V. Ramaswami Naicker and D. M. K. Founder Mr. Annadurai.

His sad demise is a great loss to the humanist and rationalist movements in Andhra Pradesh.

WOMEN SET AIR RECORD

Moscow (APN): An IL-62M Plane, piloted by an all-woman crew of Six, set a world distance record on a closed route-the triangle Moscow-Simferopol-Sverdlovsk-Moscow-of 10,388 kilometres (6,492 miles).

Earlier the same crew set a new world average speed record, covering 5,019 km. (3,137 miles) at an altitude of 9,000 metres at an average speed of 609½ mph.

The distance flight took over 13 hours and Soviet air ace Vladimir Kokkinaki said that few crews, even male, had the stamina for a flight of that duration. It demonstrated, he said, the qualities of Soviet women pilots and of Soviet planes.

The IL-62M, Aeroflot's main plane, has been in use for ten years. It flies regularly to Tokyo and to Havana, covering more than 4,370 miles over the Atlantic.

HINDU EPICS - HISTORIC OR IMAGINARY ?

By Prof. Surindra Ajnat

(Bhim Patrica Publications, Jullunder City, 36 pp. Rs 3/-)

Perhaps no other branch of study rouses more indignation than the efforts of enlightened scholarship to prove or disprove the historicity of a religion and the myths from which it draws its inspiration. The adherents of each creed grow furious for they have already convinced themselves that their particular myths and miraculous phenomena are unique and beyond question, while all others are aberrations of the truth or downright false.

Readers will probably recall the controversy in the press some time back over the statements of two archaeologists of repute that according to evidence Ayodhya, the birthplace of Rama, did not exist before 800 B.C. while the *Mahabharata* could not be dated earlier than 600 B.C. because iron was quite unknown before this period.

Professor Ajnat in this book further examines textual evidence on the historicity of both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and refutes the arguments of orthodox scholars that they are factual, authentic and extremely ancient. He deplores the strange absence of a historical sense in Indians and quotes K. M. Panniker who wrote: "Hindus as a people attached no importance to historical and biographical writing, resulting in an almost complete absence of historical literature in Sanskrit and other Indian languages."

While some kind of historical chronology appeared with the Muslims, it was only during the British period that we arrived at a scientific understanding of the historical process. However, history itself suffers defects because its very recording is a subjective process and a random example which immediately comes to mind is the way the British accounts of the "Indian Mutiny" of 1857 differ from the Indian accounts of the "First War of Independence" of 1857. When this same subjective distortion

is carried to absurd and irritational extremes as in these two epics we find ourselves in a nebulous region where fact and fiction merge and truth is eclipsed.

Now while religious tradition places the *Ramayana* before the *Mahabharata* in two distinct Yugas, Professor Ajnat presents textual evidence to the contrary. This proof immediately debunks the theory of World Ages with Dvapara Yuga, the third Age, actually preceding Treta Yuga or second Age. Archaeological findings have also demolished the concept of such great antiquity as envisaged by the World Age theory as unrealistic and unhistorical.

Examining the term *Itihas* itself with reference to its earlier context, Prof. Ajnat establishes that those writers did not understand it as we do today. To them *Itihas* included myth, legend, oral tradition, Dharma Shashtra and expositions on Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. This was because their purpose was to explain the Vedas with the help of *Itihas* and the Puranas.

Valmiki himself stated in four verses of his original work that his *Ramayana* was an epic, while the author of the *Mahabharata* states he has composed a Kavya. Neither claims their work to be history as we know it.

Great antiquity with its concept of World Ages spanning immense periods of time boggles the imagination. Humans placed against such a background appear super-human and with a hint of divinity about them. This is the psychology of all religious myths and *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are no exceptions.

The author then relates briefly some of the fantastical and unnatural incidents found in both epics which clearly prove they are

fictitious. Characters take birth in strange ways, exhibit marvellous prowess on the battlefield, and some who appear in one epic turn up in the other, thousands of years later. Age and time thus extended endures characters with that immortality normally ascribed only to gods.

In the same way and with the help of some simple arithmetic, the author shows how highly exaggerated figures occur in both epics when accounting for queens, concubines, handmaidens, sons, cattle, gold coins, and other wordly possessions. Indeed such overkill as took place on the small field of Kurukshetra with lakhs and lakhs of elephants, cavalry, infantry and chariots all destroyed within a matter of 18 days with primitive weapons suggests the wildest flight of fancy. Such astronomical numbers are certainly likely to overawe the more credulous and simple-minded, but to suggest that all of it is historically true is preposterous.

Inevitably the dilemma that confronts all believers, says the author, is that of authenticity. Which account is true? Which is history? For in addition to a Hindu Ramayana there exists a Buddhist, a Jain and numerous others. Similarly the Mahabharata turns up in Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and

other languages with each group claiming theirs alone is authentic.

The safest position then for more intelligent people is to say that the epics are allegories-reminding one of the retreat of Christians on the historicity of the Creation story vis a-vis Evolution. So Gandhi and Bhave hold the view that the *Ramayana* is an allegory of the struggle of man within himself between good and evil. This is a safe conclusion for it does not divest it entirely of its religious character. However, Periyar E. V. Ramaswamy forthrightly declared both epics fictitious manipulations by the aryaans "They are designed to lure the Dravidas into their snare, to wipe off their sense of self-respect, to blunt their discretionary faculty and destroy their humanity".

With all their contadictions, absurdities and disparities Prof. Ajnat concludes that the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are myths. "These are not history in any way and cannot be proved as faithful and authentic records of the times attributed to them by various research scholars, orthodox Pandits and the laymen of India. Pt. Nehru is right when he compares these to the stories of *Arabian Nights* and *Panchatantra*."

(The above book is on sale at IRA Ed.)

ONE DOLLAR EACH

The U. S. authorities have appropriated one million dollars for relief to women beaten up by their husbands. It is officially estimated that there are about one million such women in the country and so that means a dollar per woman. It's the idea that counts, one wit cracked.

TEST FOR REASON No. 3

A. Suryannarayana

It goes without saying that Mr. Alfred has been appointed the General Manager. Within a short time he had to recruit an Accountant for his office. After interviews, half a dozen persons were selected out of whom he had to select the best. He wanted to test their analytical mind.

He took all the six of them to the Accounts Department where he showed them three filing cabinets each containing four drawers. He explained to them that one of the cabinets contains only files, the second only registers and in the third one two drawers contain files and the other two contain registers.

The three cabinets were stencilled as "files only", "registers only" and "files and registers". He told the candidates that none of the three stencil marks indicated the actual contents. He then wanted to know whether anyone would be able to make out the actual contents in the three cabinets by just pulling out one drawer and looking at its contents.

For a couple of minutes none of them came forward. At last one of them said, "yes sir, I can do it". Can you do it? If so how? (Solution in the next issue).

RULES: 1) The entries should be received on or before 10-1-1978.

2) There is a prize of Rs. 10/- in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one

correct entries, the prize will be decided on lots.

3) Reader are requested to quote their Membership Number or Subscription Number.

SOLUTION FOR TEST No. 2

PUBLISHED IN NOV. 1977

Alfred's reasoning is very simple. If he had been wearing a white hat, since Mr. Bill raised his hand, Christopher could have at once concluded that his own hat was a black one. Similarly because Christopher also raised his hand, Bill could also have easily guessed that his own hat should be a black one. Since both of them did not respond Alfred concluded that his own should have been a black one. By using the same logic, the other two also could have guessed their own hats as black ones, but Alfred was the first to draw a logical inference.

The following have sent correct Solutions;

1. Mr. V. K. Chiranjivi Rao,
Anakapalle.
2. Mr. P. V. Jayaprakash, Bombay.
3. Mr. K. K. Kishore,
Zamigolvepalli.
4. Mr. T. P. Kunhiraman,
Ayanccheri.
5. Dr. U. R. Prasad, Bangalore.
6. Mr. K. V. Sundaramurthy,
Madras.
7. Mr. Vasi Reddy Madhu,
Kurnool.

Congratulations to all the above — in the lot Mr. P. V. Jayaprakash proved to be the lucky winner of the prize.

AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AN APPEAL

We are grateful to the following for their generous donations for FREETHOUGHT :

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Treasurer, I.R.A.

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M-432	Mr. Mahadeva Reddy	Chittcor, (A. P.)
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M-434	Mr. D. K. Nageswara Rao	Madras (Tamilnadu)
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GOLDEN JUBILEE

'YUKTHIVADI', the Malayalam rationalist monthly, celebrates its Golden Jubilee in September 1978 with grand programmes.

A special Souvenir is also intended to be published on the occasion.

The journal also plans to establish its own press as a Jubilee Memorial, which presupposes generous contributions from all quarters.

Contributions may be addressed to:

The Treasurer,
Yukthivadi Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee,
C/o Yukthivadi,
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